

FROM THE CELL TO THE WORLD

in Jesus Christ, that the son is never afraid to go to his mother ; nay, he runs to her, especially when he thinks himself hardly used ; and his mother takes him in her arms, and clasps him to her breast, and comforts him. And, although I am a bad mother, nevertheless I will always bear him at the breast of charity."¹

Worn out by her labours, Catherine herself fell dangerously ill on the feast of the Assumption of this year, 1374, and with all joy prayed for death, until restored by a vision of the Blessed Virgin, who showed her all the souls whom, if her life were prolonged, she would yet guide to eternal life.² It having been, as she believed, revealed to her that she would ultimately be the special companion in paradise of Agnese of Montepulciano, she felt a keen desire to visit her shrine in that town. Thither she now went, on her recovery, followed by Fra Raimondo and another of her confessors ; and Girolamo del Pacchia's masterpiece still preserves the legend of how, as Catherine bent down over Agnese's incorrupt body to kiss her feet, one of them raised itself to meet her lips. The painter has united this with a similar episode which is said to have occurred a little later, when Catherine came again to Montepulciano, accompanied by her sister-in-law Lisa (who had returned to Siena after her husband's death and taken the habit of the Mantellate), to place the latter's two daughters in the convent; while she laid her face to the silk covering that was over the dead face of Agnese, "Lisa and the others, lifting up their eyes, saw a very white and very minute manna, that, like rain, descended from on high in such great abundance that it covered the body of Agnese, and the virgin Catherine, as also all the others who were present, in such wise that Lisa filled her hands with those little grains."³

It was during their first stay at Montepulciano that Fra Raimondo's last doubts were dispelled concerning the divine origin

¹ *Contestatio Fr. Simonis*, MS. tit., pp. 511-516; Letter 105 (113). Cf. Dante, *Par.* xxn. 1-9.

² So the author of the *Miracoli*, quoted by Augusta Drane, I. p. 237.

³ *Legenda*, II. xii. 17-19 (§§ 327, 328). Cf. Raimondo, *Vita S. Agnetis de Monte Pohtano* (*Acta Sanctorum*, Aprilis torn, ii.), pp. 793, 794.